



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Gender Role Conflict: Analysis of its Causes and Psychosocial Impacts on Females**

Dr. Mamoon Khan Khattak<sup>1</sup> Asif Mahmood<sup>2</sup> Imran<sup>3</sup>

1. Associate Professor, Department of Social Work & Sociology, Kohat University of Science & Technology (KUST), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
2. Lecturer, Department of Social Work & Sociology, Kohat University of Science & Technology (KUST), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
3. Lecturer, Department of Social & Gender Studies, University of Swat, Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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**ABSTRACT**

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**Corresponding Author:**

mamoonkk@gmail.com

Every gender has the right of a fair level of free thinking and mental growth; however, it can be adversely affected by personality role conflict. This study has aim and concentration of analyzing psychosocial impacts of Gender Role Conflict (GRC) on personalities of females. Based on purposive selection, the literature is cited as secondary data source and respective textual analysis has been made. Theoretical universe for the study has been the female gender of society. The textual discussion was made for reaching the judgment. Conclusion of the study shows that GRC does adversely affect females' personality psychosocially. It is recommended that the individuals shall be left free, within religio-ethical limits, to live their lives free and healthy as per their choice. Either in home or at office, women should be given advantage and flexibility in respect of their over-burdened and conflicting roles

**Introduction**

Allah Almighty and Holy Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him through divine Islamic teachings guide and direct humanity to live a straight-life of fairness based on clarity of thoughts, speech and conduct. The social, psychological, emotional, spiritual, and economic development is possible only when individuals live a life with clear mind, goal, and direction. The confused minds with role conflict create unease and psychological dichotomy hampering individual's persona-state.

Based on natural determination of biological and genetic sex-specific instinctual-urges-oriented roles determined for each sex (for male and for females) by Allah Almighty, everyone, willingly or forcefully (unwillingly) has to go accordingly. A gender-phenomenon is the assigning of status, roles and responsibilities to a specific biological-sex in a particular society, changing from time to time, evolutionarily. This gender conception is subject to religious-teachings, socio-cultural environment, geographic localities, political atmosphere, socio-economic practices, historical facts, and other eventualities that shape it. Usually, individuals from each-gender play their roles according to their conceptions and status in society. The status and role are associated to each other with role being subject to status, hence modality of role performance do cause variations in status too. If the role is not played according to the status and expectations of the society, eventually the individuals do face resistance, social pressure and opposition from the members of society. This opposition to females' non-conformity to their societal set-roles can put them in adverse psychological states and can cause issues like anxiety, depression, displeasure and alienation etc., which both cause and is the impact of Gender Role Conflict (GRC).

Many have approached differently to give females a right place according to circumstantial suitability being within normative abstract-structure of a society. Though the females' place in society remained somehow as differing and dichotomous (diametrically opposed). This dichotomy (irreconcilable difference) creates a conflict, controversy and contradiction within the psychological state and personality of the female-gender, which lead them to GRC. The mental, cognitive, emotional, feelings, sensations, social, and psychological complexes affect females' functioning and performance adversely, as the human's acts and functioning are subject to one's thinking, cognitive processes, and mental state. The females do compose nearly half of societal human-population, therefore the study has got significance for highlighting a core phenomenon that sensitize and generate a thought direction. This study highlights the issue of GRC's prevalence, its causes and psychological impacts on females. The future research, academic explorations, and professional tasks can be done on similar, related, or on variant lines.

### **Methodological Approach**

The study has endeavored to highlight the prevalence of a core social phenomenon of Gender Role Conflict (GRC) faced by females. It is a review analysis explanatory study. The arguments were built to judge the hypothetical construct of study; hypothetical basis was laid down and literature analysis was made which express "the emergence and occurrence of psychological issues due to Gender Role Conflict among personalities of female gender". Future research can be conducted addressing different dimensions that are not covered in this study, which were the limitations of this study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Though the researchers are the directional proponents of the research-hypothesis and thesis, even then, it was tried that the natural real-depiction of the social phenomenon under discussion may remain as it is, and unbiased. The study was limited (the focus of study was over) to the psychosocial impacts of Gender Role Conflict (GRC) and related issues being experienced by female gender in society, and hence, it cannot be generically said that all women of the society are passing through GRC's dichotomy.

### **Discussion**

The study's discussion has been made in the context of emerging, evolving, growing, and varying human societies. The societies vary around the world, some are culture-preserving, some are moderate, and some are liberal one; there are such structured socio-cultural norms that create role conflict and strain for females, which cause GRC, and GRC do have its psychosocial impacts, which have adverse implications for females' uplift particularly, and for society in general.

### **Concept of Gender Role Conflict**

Passing through growth and development stages, individuals evolutionarily since their childhood form conceptions of proper way for thinking, feeling, acting, and behaving. Primary experiences held in life become determinant of gender roles that are internalized cultural-expectations based on societal norms (Fragoso & Kashubeck, 2000). The gender roles and the potential pressure these roles may generate for individuals are the established conceptions (Kimmel, 1987). The 1970's feminist movement generated conflicts and misperceptions among women and men who were attempting to acclimatize with varying gender roles; the gender role paradigm is 'the role sets, statuses, expectations and behavior-patterns acceptable to society either as feminine or as masculine, which are personified as behavior for men and women, and also culturally considered as suitable to females or to males' (O'Neil, 1981). The gender roles are operationally defined by gender role stereotypes and norms, and these norms develop from the dominant gender ideology in society (Reidy et al., 2016).

The conception of gender-role is stated as behavior related anticipations, and role-sets fashioned by society as feminine or masculine is behaviorally exemplified within men and women individuals, and are considered as culturally suitable to females or to males (O'Neil, 1981). Gender-role perceptions are socially constructed abstract behavioral standards for individuals in society. The anticipations of tasks related to gender and power-sharing roles' expression may vary inside a culture and transversely to cultures. Social role approach, the principal method to comprehend beliefs related to gender roles, do link the birthplaces of these beliefs to varying social roles did by women and by men (Eagly & Wood, 1991).

The evolution of methods of gender role identity, such as, the Bem Sex Role Inventory, facilitated researchers in demonstrating that women or men can have either a principally masculine gender role (identity mainly exhibiting masculine characters), a feminine gender role (identity mainly exhibiting feminine characters), an androgynous gender role (identity exhibiting both feminine and masculine characters), or an undifferentiated gender role (identity exhibiting neither feminine nor masculine traits). Being female or male does not essentially visualize gender role i.e. being feminine or masculine (Bem, 1974). Hence, being female or being male is also significantly linked to the level of conflict one passes-through, and females pass-through greater GRC (Kramer & Melchior, 1990), especially they experience conflict due to contradiction between occupational requirements and domestic demands, and that generate GRC for the reason because of gender allied anticipations which are varying with their concept of self (Gray, 1983; Zappert & Weinstein, 1985). The GRC is comprised of intertwined, personal, and interpersonal experiences of devaluation, restriction, and violation, by gender (Gelfer, 2014).

The analysis of adverse effects of socialized gender role dominantly termed as "Gender Role Conflict (GRC)", while sometime as "Sex Role Conflict (SRC)" and sometime as "Sex Role Strain (SRS)" endures to be a zone of scientific investigation (Garnets & Pleck, 1979). One understanding of occurrence of GRC is that the individuals unconsciously adopt culturally transmitted gender role ideology and actively engage in determining how gender roles shape their lives and lives of others (Courtenay, 2000). Personal and interpersonal experiences of GRC are categorized as gender role devaluation, gender role restriction, stereotypical gender norms, and gender role violations due to disparaging gender role norms.

### **Causes of Gender Role Conflict**

Females, a not fully-privileged part of population, are required to play diverse roles in society. Interacting with people at variant stages of life in society, the females develop Gender Role Conflict (GRC) and its strain putting them in frustration and anxiety. As the femininity was understood as sets of behaviors interest and traits linked with the gender role of female, for example, submissiveness, nurturing, and empathetic (Helgeson, 2016). The varying expectations and non-traditional messages in relation to desired gender behavior is developing an environment contributory to a conflict within personalities (Banos, 2017).

While Adams and Bradbury (1995) share that the general societal conflicts have multiple interconnected triggers, which may include reasons like, ranging from, volition of individuals and groups of actors, institutionalized injustices, structural inequalities, issues of democracy and governance, unresolved issues of sovereignty and identity, to issues like uneven development, environmental change, and poverty. The institutional policies and practices, ranging from family level to state level, manifest gender inequalities with adverse impacts on women in

terms of opportunities, resources, capacities, and voice. Majority females are required to perform more than one role simultaneously and parallel, requiring multitasking - and multiple compatible personality-traits, though females are usually considered and treated as weaker being in society. Connel (1987) says that empowered social status of men creates and sustains inequality among genders; experimental indication on inequality of gender exhibits the foundations of an 'organized arena of social relations and human practice' by usage of which females are kept in subordinate status to males.

The general socio-environmental conditions are less conducive for females to move on compatibly in a male-driven society. Within the struggle for achieving an esteemed status in society they have to cope with multi-dimensional challenges. The males though are of not much developed state in society, still many steps ahead of females. In many spheres of life, males are comparatively empowered while females are having lesser freedom and space of decision-making, leaving them dependent over male members, giving them insufficient room for growth and development. Herman (1988) quoted Bella Abzug saying 'it is worrisome that as women, we have to request for support systems inside families, for decent wages, and for the dignity to do what men routinely do'. The problems may seem more and difficult, hence equity for women workers, whether pink collar, blue collar, or professional, is not impossible. Females may also not grow optimally at workplaces wherein their work-related rights are not safeguarded. The females must be given with adequate wages, conducive environment and respect at workplace, which will give them greater psycho-social satisfaction resulting in role clarity and role direction.

Females experience GRC because of limited access to facilities mandatory for socio economic development in society. In addition to several other reasons, two reasons of women's deprivation are; (one is of) keeping them abstained from educational attainment and (other is of) not to leave them for financial empowerment. This scenario turn-them in GRC because of their disadvantageous status with respect to education, employment, business, trade, politics, science, arts, literature, service, property, social welfare, and so on. Herman (1988) concluded on few needs of working women, including, decent wages and benefits, affordable child care, beneficial training and education for advancement in jobs, and decent and dignified working conditions. Women demand these things repeatedly in different accents and ways, hence response is not much satisfactory.

Females usually experience role conflict due to multiplicity of roles they play, and particularly when these roles are contradictory to each other. Difficulties arise when they have to deal and perform multiple tasks in one go and meet tough deadline. Female has to perform a number of activities; she has to look for her household, her husband, children, in-laws, relatives, neighbors etc. at one side, while on the other side she gets education, do job, and make a professional career having its own dynamic requirements. It is agreed upon that females receive less support for progressing towards their empowerment. Females face difficulties

while dealing with their domestic chores and professional duties at same time. Horton and Chester (2004) shared that a single female can have a role set of being a wife, a mother, a daughter, a sister, a cousin, a neighbor, a friend, a relative, an employee, a member of a club, a member of an organization of women's wing, a columnist, a member of writers' association, a business-owner, a property owner, a professional worker, a student, and or a therapist etc. Being human, it is understood that an individual, particularly females, face difficulty playing multiple roles demanding more time, attention and energy. The role-players (females) experience conflicting and contradictory expectations associated with different role-sets to be performed by them.

In some societies, women are enjoying better positions in respect of social rights, as well as rights of economic security and welfare, and the opportunity to live a 'civilized life' according to societal criteria (Marshall, 1950). While, in some other societies, females have to pass through stages of achieving a just degree of freedom for their social and psychological spheres of lives. They are still facing role conflict situations and are challenged-with to take themselves out of it. The women in society experience difficulty to decide on their own, to plan, or to do activities with significant freedom of their choice. The predominant gendered notions and cultural perceptions influence the response of governance institutions to needs and interests of women and men. Women are considered significantly powerless to decide or implement on their own, and they are feared to be at risk of adversities resulting from decisions that they made independently. The phenomenon of avoidance of 'making decisions independently' put females in conditions like sense of low exposure, limited freedom, rare autonomy, less empowerment and scarce chances of development etc.

The persons whose gender role and state of affairs matches with their personal-competencies do rarely experience GRC than persons whose gender role and state of affairs mismatch. Parry (1987) explored that the mothers who are employed and possess customary gender role views (an incongruity) and the mothers that are not employed and possess liberal gender role views (also an incongruity) shared raised level of anxiety as compared with other mothers (whose gender role views and status of employment is congruent).

### **Psychosocial Impacts of Gender Role Conflict on Females**

The social pressures for conformity to established gender roles may put individuals in Gender Role Conflict (GRC), and that is both a psychological and a social condition in which structured learned gender roles, less flexible, do have adverse impacts for persons or others. This conflict results in either restriction of persons' competence to objectify their human capability, or in restraining of some others' potentials, or even it can result in both outcomes. Sex role strain is also an intrapsychic course leading to a meager psychological adjustment, especially resulting in lower self-esteem (Garnets & Pleck, 1979).

The Behavioral and Social Scientists progressively concentrate over cognizing the contributing modus of the socialized gender roles to persons' relationships-worth and their well-being (Hunter & Forden, 2002; Kirchmeyer, 2002; Witt, 2000). In Psychological work, the clinicians include gender role analysis and consultations on the proven association between well-being and gender roles (Brown, 1986; Gilbert & Scher, 1999; Brooks & Good, 2001; Mahalik, Good & Englar-Carlson, 2003). The established gender roles are expected to generate social and psychological pressures for conforming-individuals (Kimmel, 1987). Studies show that GRC is linked with a diversity of adverse impacts, both interpersonal and intrapersonal, and it also cause raised degrees of anxiety and do affects the capability for intimacy (Sharpe & Heppner, 1991). The Gender Role Conflict (GRC) prevents persons from achieving their full potential, and in this context a number of restrictions are unreasonably placed upon females (Sharpe, Heppner & Dixon, 1995).

Role conflict generates a psychic/psychological dichotomy which put the individuals' mind into two (or even more) conditions' controversies. Pilcher and Imelda (2004) has given the concept of role conflict having significant impact on emergence of West-based knowledge theories, wherein truth is comprehended comprising of pairs consisting of 'either' or 'or'. Some of dichotomous or binary rationale are, for example, normal or deviant, reason or emotion, nature or nurture, true or false, public or private, science or culture, hard or soft, self or other, objectivity or subjectivity, knowledge or experience, and male or female. This dichotomous entity is the allowance of a variance between two objects, into an opposition; each fragment is dependent on the other fragment for its status, and each fragment is demonstrated by expression that it is not the other one. There is inequality between these entities; the entity that is subordinate can gain upward value only when it is excelling.

The GRC is a psychological and social condition wherein learnt gender roles have adverse impacts for individuals themselves and for other persons (O'Neil, Good, & Holmes, 1995). The GRC is linked with psychological distresses of general nature (Hayes & Mahalik, 2000), and of particular psychological issues, which include impacts like higher degrees of anxiety, intense depression, lowered self-esteem (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995), and amplified stress-altitudes (Sharpe & Heppner, 1991). The GRC is linked with psychological, interpersonal and intrapersonal problems. These problems include anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, guilt, stress, shame, self-destructiveness, hopelessness, refusing help-seeking, stigmatization, and issues with psychosocial needs like connection, intimacy, family individuation, social relationships, self-disclosure, parental relationships, family dynamics, stereotyping, marital satisfaction, attitudes toward men and women, equalitarianism, couple relationships, bias, negative attitudes, internalized oppression, and issues in bonding etc. (O'Neil, Good & Holmes, 1995).

Berger et al. (2005) explored that GRC is linked to risen state of lesser help-seeking and psychological stresses. GRC show a significant correlation with

depression, as the distress of fulfilling norms can be worrying for individuals, and this factor make GRC considerably correlated to stress and anxiety (Theodore & Lloyd, 2000). Psychological and physical strain, universal psychological stress levels, physical inadequacy, performance failure, and competition comparison strain, and likely phenomenon are found significantly linked to GRC (Davenport, Hetzel & Brook, 1998). Researchers have exhibited that GRC is linked to weak psychological well-being (Sharpe, Heppner & Dixon, 1995). Low self-esteem is being assumed as a consequence of gender role strain and GRC. The shame, and incapacity of expressing ones' feelings through arguments, called as Alexithymia, are related to GRC (Levant, 1995). The intimacy, sociability, closeness, lack of interpersonal competence, and rare cherished disclosure of self has been considerably linked to GRC (Brunch, Berko & Hasse, 1998).

The restrictive, hard, rigid, sexist gender roles, causing GRC, produce-in the individual's personal limitations, restrictions, violations or devaluation of oneself or of others, and in contrast to normative models, GRC model conceptualizes it as the level of professed conflict between one's interaction of environmental and learned or internalized gender roles related to one's biological factors that do promote certain gender oriented values (O'Neil, 2008a). GRC is empirically and constantly found as connected to variant adverse impacts, including heightened stress levels, anxiety (Liu & Iwamoto, 2006), low self-esteem (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995), depression (Fragoso & Kasubeck, 2000), shame (Thompkins & Rando, 2003), reduced level of marital satisfaction (Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004), substance abuse (Monk & Ricciardelli, 2003), and other adverse interpersonal and intrapersonal consequences (O'Neil, 2008b). The GRC affects psychological health in the predicted directions (Good & Mintz, 1990). Cook (1990) postulates that GRC in actual affects both on what is found as problematic, in addition to the ways in which this suffering is demonstrated.

Men's-GRCs do too is the subject of discussion in prevalent literature (Farrell, 1974; Pleck & Sawyer, 1974). Several researches document men's conflict linked with their socialized gender roles (Doyle & Moore, 1978). This research-area give scientific comprehension regarding the manners in which the gender roles generate conflict in men's lives (Levinson et al., 1978). Men are conventionally socialized for power-seeking, self-reliance, autonomy, and in possession of control, and the help-seeking among men is therefore, in such case, directly mismatching to values assimilated through socialization (Chamow, 1978; Nadler et al., 1984). O'Neil (1981) also found that the masculinity's values such as success, power, and competition are considered to be affecting the factor of help-seeking within men. Similarly, Blazina and Watkins (1996) discovered that the GRC were subscales of power, competition, and success, and constricting emotionality linked with manifold purviews of males' psychological well-being, and the affected were found to be more anxious, experiencing psychological distresses, anger, and resemble with personality kinds of those that are chemical drug abusers. O'Neil (1981) brought forward that males have also been experiencing oppression and restriction through hard, rigid and stern socialization of gender roles limiting their

prospective capabilities to be fully operative and being complete human beings. The males, due to limited thoughts, feelings, gender roles, and behaviors regarding gender roles of masculine nature foresee momentous interpersonal and psychological problems.

### **Conclusion**

Primary experiences held in life become determinant of gender roles that are internalized cultural-expectations based on societal norms. The individuals unconsciously adopt culturally transmitted gender role ideology and actively engage in determining how gender roles shape their lives and lives of others. The GRC is a psychological and social condition wherein learnt gender roles have adverse outcomes for individuals' self and for others. The females develop Gender Role Conflict (GRC) and its strain putting them in frustration and anxiety. GRC is linked with psychological distresses of general and particular nature, which include impacts like higher degrees of anxiety, intense depression, lower self-esteem, and amplified stress-altitudes. Experience of Gender Role conflict (GRC) results in social, psychological, sentimental emotional and spiritual implications for female-gender i.e. these contradictory roles and its implications are adverse. This unfavorable situation may result in under-utilization of their potentials; consequently they grow lesser in psychosocial terms, whilst human development is ensured when human potentials are optimally explored and fully utilized.

Evidential that the roles performed with less value addition do charge exertion of energies, give rare mental satisfaction to role-performer, because contributions are not acknowledged leaving less room for encouragement and motivation. Psychologists theorize that this acknowledgement, appreciation and encouragement as revitalizing, reinforcing and motivating factors make individuals bold and clear in mind to perform these roles again, while females experience role conflict because several activities often performed by them are less acknowledged, encouraged, and entertained.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the

- i. Society, generally, should not be developing and setting too structured gender role expectations from the individuals, as every individual is with a unique personality, choices, likes-and-dislikes, instinctual urges, capacities to do something or not to do something. Some role-sets may be easy for some individuals, while difficult and frustrating for others.
- ii. There are some natural-biological role-sets for males and females determined by Allah Almighty and guided by Holy Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him, individual males and females shall be trained to ensure conformity to that roles, while rest of the masculine or feminine

roles shall be left flexible to the individuals' choices, personalities, and circumstances.

- iii. For role-conformity, there should not be exertive societal pressures, which necessarily generate GRC - and resultant psycho-social distresses. Individuals perform role-sets when they are given with freedom and choices, while they are stressed when they are put in structured socio-cultural environment.
- iv. The individuals shall be left free, within religio-ethical limits, to live their lives munificently as per their choice, and let them pave their ways for free and healthy lives. This will help them own their social relations, society, life, and they will not consider it as the imposed alienated patterns of society.
- v. Either in home or at office, women should be given advantage and flexibility with respect to their over-burdened and conflicting roles. This will help them reduce their conflicts, distresses, and will help them live healthy lives.
- vi. In case of some GRC based originated personality conflicts, the females may be provided with the counseling support, psychological support, social motivation, and helped-out in coping with these conflicting roles, and removal of distresses caused by GRC should be ensured.

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